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## SOCIOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS IN INNER CHINA

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China is the European Middle Ages made visible. All the cities are walled and the walls are kept in a condition for use. The streets are narrow, crooked, poorly paved, filthy, and malodorous. There is no public lighting, and until recent years there was no force to maintain public order. The people use raw river water brought to them in buckets by regular water carriers. System of public sewage there is none; but the cultivators are so eager for fertilizer that in the early morning they penetrate to every street and lane and by nine o'clock they have removed from every house that which the wasteful West casts into its sewers. Most of the houses are low and mean and the windows are few, small, and unglazed. Until American kerosene began to penetrate the Empire the common source of light was a bit of cotton wick hanging over the edge of an iron cup containing rape seed oil. Pasture there is none and little fruit is grown; for the production of the staples of human food has the first claim on the soil. Lumber is too dear to be used freely in building. Coal is largely neglected and charcoal is the chief fuel.

The handicraft stage prevails, machinery is unknown, and I have never seen in China a windmill. Waterpowers are used, but only for grinding. The exchange of bulky commodities is slight and the people of one province may be starving while in the neighboring province there is food a-plenty. On the road to

Shansi I met on the way to distant markets cartloads of salt, paper, wool, hides, cotton, tobacco, licorice, oil, and flour. Coal, charcoal, locust wood, wheat, and millet were bound for nearer markets. A few miles from the pit's mouth I found good lump coal selling at \$0.80 a ton; while a hundred miles away the same coal was selling for \$5.60. The cost of carting was \$0.04½ a ton.

There is little provision for the unfortunate, and the cripple or the leper begs his bread by the roadside. After the sheaves have been gathered in, poor widows and children spread over the stubble fields and glean the heads of wheat the rakes have missed. There are professional beggars, united in strong guilds, who blackmail the reluctant shopkeeper into giving by keeping up such a din in front of his shop that no customer will enter. Until the new system started six years ago, there were no free common schools. Not over one man in ten can read, and less than one woman in a hundred. The masses believe in witchcraft and evil eye, and, while normally very peaceable, may, when goaded by superstitious fear, form fanatical and cruel mobs as did our forefathers in the Middle Ages. Until recently newspapers were wanting, there was no real public opinion and no participation whatsoever of the people in government. In order to impose a check upon the rulers in the interests of the people, the ancient sages taught that, while the ruler governs by the will of heaven, the rising of his people is a sure sign that Heaven's mandate has been withdrawn. Insurrection, therefore, was taught as a sacred right of the people—a doctrine more productive of disorder and woe than all the errors democracies have ever committed.

The analogy with the Middle Ages should not, however, be pressed too far. To our Middle Ages were unknown such features of China as a purely secular learning, competitive civil service examinations, ancestor worship, the patriarchal family, parental control of matrimony, the system of mutual responsibility, and direct imperial administration. On the other hand, contemporary China knows nothing of such mediaevalisms as feudalism, the manor, hereditary caste, ecclesiasticism, the religious orders, chivalry, and the passion for the chase.

## THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

To the sociologic eye, the most outstanding thing in the Far East is the pressure of population upon the means of subsistence. Evidences of it are seen in an intensive farming carried on by hand implements rather than the plow, in the measures taken to recover the fertile elements washed from the soil, in the eager and instant appropriation of everything of fertilizing value, in the impressive fashion in which the landscape has been carved, molded, and terraced as if by giant hands, in the completeness of utilization that has carried the fields right up to the crest of the mountains, in some cases, five thousand feet above the floor of the valley, in the elimination of most domestic animals save the scavengers, such as pigs and fowl, in the simplicity of the diet of the common people, and the retention therein of coarse or even repulsive food elements. Secondary consequences of population pressure are the very small proportion of well-to-do or rich families, the cheapness of human labor, the low standard of comfort, the squalor of the habitations of the cultivators, the waste of health and life in such undermining occupations as that of the ricksha runner, the chair bearer, the porter, and the treadmill coolie, the early age at which boys are turned to account, the smallness of the funds available for philanthropy, the exposure of female infants, the callousness to human suffering shown by a people so hard pressed that they cannot indulge in sympathy or generosity, the solidarity that prevails in those mutual aid associations—family, clan, or guild—that tide the individual over crises in his life, and a religious materialism that prompts worship in the frank hope of deriving worldly benefit from the favor of the gods.

The population pressure is not due to the niggardliness of the soil, the sloth or stupidity of the people, the prevalence of wasteful vices, the oppression of government, or the exploitation of landlord or capitalist. Beyond all question, it is due to a family system that eliminates every prudential check on multiplication. The Chinese imagine that unless twice a year his male descendants offer paper money at his grave a man's spirit wanders forlorn about the spirit world begging its rice. It is therefore the

pitch of recklessness for a man to neglect to leave male children, and enough of them to allow for mischance and death. Moreover, as it is a father's prerogative to make matches for his children, and as life is not for long in China, the prudent man secures a wife for his son as soon as that son is of the proper marrying age, i.e., twenty or twenty-one. To delay beyond that time is considered dangerous because the youth's ungratified sex impulses may drive him into vicious courses. The average age of the bride appears to be sixteen or seventeen years. In some provinces it was until recently as low as fourteen or fifteen. Nearly all the fertile years are passed in wedlock and there are no spinsters. All girls marry save those recruited young for prostitution, so that a very large proportion of the potential fecundity of the female population is actualized.

There is no feeling that a young man should refrain from marriage until he is able to support a wife. It is his parents' affair, not his. When the proper time comes a wife is provided and a couple live with his parents until he is launched in life. Owing to the exposure of female infants and the contingent of prostitutes there are not enough women to go around. The result is that there is a bride price, and those too poor to pay it must go without wives. In China the element that does not reproduce itself is not, as with us, the most successful, but precisely that class of poorly paid or thriftless which presumably is least likely to contribute valuable qualities to the next generation.

Inasmuch as the population of China, which grew from a hundred millions in 1700 to over four hundred millions in the middle of the nineteenth century, seems to have become virtually stationary during the last sixty years, the mortality of China somehow contrives to balance the enormous fecundity. The adjustment comes about partly through a higher mortality at every age and adult life term shortened by say fifteen years, but chiefly through the enormous loss of infants. There are no statistics collected within the empire, but the peepholes into a Chinese population we obtain through the figures the Japanese collect in Formosa and the British in Hongkong reveal that half of

those born do not live beyond the first half-year and 75 per cent to 85 per cent are dead before the end of the second year. Besides the unspeakable ignorance and superstition of mothers there are certain ultimate consequences of Chinese poverty—viz., exposure of female infants, the absence of milk, neglect, insufficient food, overcrowding, contagious infantile diseases—which bear with relentless severity on child life and thus bring about a readjustment of numbers in the early years. Thanks to this, the strain is less on the adults, the majority get a sufficiency of coarse food, and in normal seasons, the people of China are fairly well nourished.

#### THE PHYSICAL CONSTITUTION

Out of ten European children, three will die by the end of their second year. Out of ten Chinese children in China, these three will die and four or five more besides. If the ten white children and the ten yellow children are equal in physical stamina, then the three surviving yellow children ought to possess a tougher constitution than the seven surviving white children. The four of these survivors that would have perished under Oriental conditions of life certainly do not match in vitality the three that could have endured even these conditions. If now, for some generations, the whites have been subjected to a less relentless and searching mortality than the Chinese, it would be reasonable to expect the Chinese to exhibit a tougher physique than the whites. With this in mind I questioned thirty-six physicians practicing in China, usually at mission or government hospitals, regarding the recovery of their Chinese patients from injuries, from surgical operations, and from diseases. Only three failed to notice any difference between the response of the Chinese constitution and that of the white man's constitution. Two of these had practiced twenty-five years in China and I think their recollections of their brief practice among whites had become too faint to give them a term of comparison. The third had found the rude and simple peasantry of Thuringia quite as tough as the Chinese. From the rest I gathered that the Chinese recover oftener from desperate injuries and surgical opera-

tions, that they recover more quickly, that the loss in little, poorly equipped semi-aseptic hospitals in China is not greater than in the first-class hospitals of the West, that there is less surgical shock, that nervous chill is rarer, that the Chinese are less sensitive to pain, that they pass under the influence of chloroform more easily and come out from it without after-nausea. that they recover better from high fevers, though not from long fevers, that with them typhoid fever is rare and smallpox is a jest, that the Chinese resist infections that will kill a white man, and recover from blood-poisoning or tetanus after they have been given up. Furthermore, they can stand longer hours of toil, less sleep, and worse air for a longer time than the white man can.

Unfortunately for the interesting generalization that seemed just about to emerge I found that about half of the physicians attribute this superior showing to wholesome manner of life rather than to greater congenital vitality. They go off so easily under chloroform because they have never used alcohol. Their superior resistance to fevers and to infections is attributed to their vegetable diet. Their stoical enduring of painful operations to their ignorance of what is coming and to their lack of anticipative imagination. If the women of the *sampan* bear children with such amazing ease that Doctor Swan of Canton has more than once waited a quarter or a half an hour till the *sampan* woman could bear a child before rowing him across the river, it is because of their simple diet, bodily labor, and life in the open air. It is pointed out that the rich, meat-eating, wine-bibbing Chinese show little of the toughness of the common people, but, on the contrary, become assimilated to the white man.

The best conclusion I can reach is that part of the difference between the reaction of the white man and that of the yellow is due to heredity, and part to diet and manner of life.

#### THE MENTAL CONSTITUTION

I questioned forty-odd persons, who as seasoned missionaries or educators may be presumed to know the "feel" of the Chinese mind, as to the native intellectual power of the yellow race as compared with the white. Seven out of eight considered

them the peers of the whites. The educators observed that their pupils have wonderful memory power and even in physics or mathematics attempt to rely on memorizing rather than reasoning. They react less to teacher and textbook than do our students, and are apt to regard the microscopic slides, the cabinet specimens, or the experiment as the illustration rather than the source of the law. These shortcomings, however, are by most teachers attributed to the early surroundings of the youth and to the defective elementary and grammar-school training upon which the Western teacher must build. The impression left on my mind by the evidence I was able to gather is that if you mark the white race 100 on a scale of which the lowest races constitute the zero, the Chinese are certainly not lower than 85 and are quite possibly entitled to a mark of 100. It will be yet some time before there are many Chinese equipped with as sound a training and working under as powerful stimuli as conspire to produce the present intellectual output of our race. Until the more precise comparison can be made the only safe thing to do is to rate the Chinese as the peers of the white men in intellect. Perhaps we should prepare our minds for the point of view expressed by an eminent sinologue when he said to me: "Most of us who have been out here twenty-five years or more come to feel that the yellow race is the normal human type while the white race is a sport."

#### THE FAMILY

Two assumptions give the key to the structure of the Chinese family, namely, the superiority of the male over the female, and the superiority of the old over the young. Each of these limits and mitigates the other. Till she has a son, the lot of the female is not unlike that of other Oriental women, but with motherhood she rises to a higher position and her status and authority with respect to her grown sons and grandsons is enviable. In law, ethics, and current public opinion, the position of the parent with respect to his grown children is distinctly stronger than with us; and in my judgment, the relation makes for happiness. A man's sons are his old-age pension. Daughters, since they merge into



their husband's family, are practically lost to their parents, but the more sons a couple have, the better provided they are for their old age. I recall a teacher of forty with a family of his own, who every month hands his salary over to his father who returns to him what he deems proper. I was greatly struck by the serene, benign expression on the faces of the old farmers. Their brows were free from the wrinkles of worry, and black care seemed to haunt them less than it does our own elderly farmers. At best, old age is none too happy, and I believe that the preference and deference that sons are bound to show their parents is more easement to the parents than it is a burden to the sons. I feel that among Americans individualism within the family has gone too far for happiness and that we could learn from the Chinese.

On the other hand, the Chinese have made a great mistake in their excessive subordination of girls and women. Regarding the universe as balanced between the principle of good and the principle of evil, Yang and Yin, they identify the female with the Yin principle in the human species. Woman is to man what our forefathers thought that Eve was to Adam, the temptress and corrupter. Women must therefore be subordinated, for anything approaching equality of the sexes would wreck society. Very few girls receive any schooling, and women have not the least share either direct or indirect in guiding public affairs or in molding institutions which affect them quite as much as the men. Foot-binding, which still cripples a hundred million females, greatly narrows the sphere within which woman moves. Excluded from all association with men, women have scarcely any access to any source of enlightenment. This dwarfing of the female half of the race results in certain serious social effects.

First, women do not know how to discipline their children. Fitful and capricious, they spoil them and contribute nothing of value to the formation of moral character.

Second, there being no possibility of women forming a common opinion and reacting collectively, mothers have been compelled, in deference to a grotesque conventionality of male taste, to inflict upon their little daughters the agonies and disabilities of foot mutilation.

Third, for the same reason, the conserving, home-defending instincts of women have been entirely null in contending with the terrible ravages of the opium habit. If the women of the Far East had had opportunities to contend with opium as our American women have contended with alcoholism, the drug would never have made such terrible inroads.

Fourth, the elimination of women from social life, so that parties, picnics, and feasts are exclusively men's affairs, deprives each sex of the stimulus, interest, and charm of the other. To the resulting monotony and dreariness is to be attributed the strong tendency to find relief in opium smoking and gambling, everywhere the besetting vices of the Chinese.

The most striking instances I have ever met of the reaction of industrial opportunity upon the position of women is found in three districts in central Quangtung, where women can easily support themselves by silk winding. In these districts thousands of girls have for a long time maintained anti-matrimonial associations in which each member binds herself to leave her husband after the three days required by custom and return to her parents' home. There she supports herself by her labor and does not return permanently to her husband at all unless a child is born. In vain have parents and magistrates sought to compel the girls to return to their wifely duty. The girls threaten to take opium or drown themselves and, if too hard pressed, they carry out their threat. This extraordinary revolt of young women against the hard lot of the Chinese wife seems to be spontaneous and unprompted by foreign influence.

#### PRIVATE INTEREST AND PUBLIC INTEREST

The mass of the people seem to be too primitive in their thinking to distinguish a public interest apart from particular private interests. I found peasants flailing out their sheaves on the highway because it was more convenient thus to utilize the public road than to prepare a threshing-floor. I have seen half of the sixteen-foot main street of a great provincial capital occupied by the wheat that some householder had spread out to dry. The traffic squeezed itself into the remaining half of the street and

nobody protested against his encroachment. In Foochow the original width of the main artery of the city was twelve feet. But every shopkeeper has built his counter in front of his lot line. The stalls have lined the street with their crates and baskets of fish and vegetables. The artisans overflow into the street with their work benches and the final result is that the traffic filters painfully through a five- or six-foot passage, which would be yet more encroached on but for the fact that there must be room left for two sedan chairs to pass.

On the mountain portion of the great paved highroad connecting Peking with the Western Provinces I noticed that for a furlong in the neighborhood of each village the paving had disappeared. I discovered at last that in every case the villagers had simply dug up the paving stones and used them to build pig pens or garden walls. Owing to these depredations, each year a hundred thousand loaded coolies go slipping and laboring miserably through these stretches of muck, and yet nothing is done. The private scheme is sacred and must be given the right of way no matter what the damage to the general public. For in Chinese eyes the private right is something distinct and clear-cut which each understands and sympathizes with, while the public right is not visualized at all or, in any case, commands no sympathy. If my next-door neighbor chooses to have a dramatic troupe perform in front of his house, ergo, in front of my house too; if he makes the night clamorous with gongs and songs, I do not protest. It is all his affair. The whole neighborhood tolerates the shattering of its sleep because each imagines that some time, perhaps, he will want to have a festivity in front of *his* house.

In general, it is a rule of action for a Chinaman never to interfere with another man's game. If a man has gotten a graft or a monopoly, those who know of it do not expose him. It would be bad form and accounted malicious persecution; besides, each bethinks himself that some day he may have a little game of his own. There is lack of that public spirit which in the West prompts men who have no private grievance to stand out against wrong and, at risk to themselves, fight for the interests of the unorganized public.

## THE NEGLECT OF CONSERVATION

In all directions one notes how the people suffer by neglecting to protect common interests against the greedy encroachments of individuals. In the valley of the Wei great quantities of trees are grown, while the adjacent mountains are bare. Instead of growing their fuel on the steeps, which are good for nothing else, the people have to grow it in the fields among their crops, because, the mountains being public land, there is no power to prevent the robbery of the pines that try to cover them. The telegraph wire is strung on crooked willow poles, while in another province lie rotting great piles of straight larch poles cut for the telegraph department. The roadside ditches are bailed out to get little fishes of a finger's length, because what one does not take, another will. After a rain the main cartroad is a canal from which the water has no exit. The mule muscle wasted during a week in pulling carts through the quagmire would easily repair the road for a year.

Slopes at an angle of forty or even forty-five degrees are cleared and opened up on the mountain side and, after a few crops of maize, the underlying rock is washed bare and the soil forms a bar in the muddy river a thousand feet below. The tumbling mountain torrents that once were emerald are now turbid with the wash from the denuded mountain sides and in many cases square miles of rich bottom land have been ruined by being covered several feet deep with a mantle of sand and gravel brought down by some side stream since the slopes began to be eroded. Such is the natural and inevitable result of letting private interests have full swing. A thousand years ago China could have been saved by conservation policy; today, after most of her natural beauty and much of her natural wealth has disappeared in the endeavor to sustain more human beings than the land was fitted to support, she needs a recuperation policy to build her up so far as she is not already hopelessly wrecked. For, indeed, wandering geologists tell me of districts in north-west China, once well peopled and tilled, where the mountains have been stripped of soil, the valleys have been made barren by

the wash from the mountains, and there is now not one family in four square miles.

#### THE IDEOGRAPHIC LANGUAGE

The use of several thousand ideographs for what we work out on the basis of twenty-six characters shows that in China the development of a written language has been halted at a comparatively early stage. This arrest does not appear to be due to any lack of linguistic ingenuity but to the fact that at a very early period appeared a group of great thinkers who by the merit of the literature they produced petrified the language at the stage in which they left it.

This cumbrous system of writing cannot but impose a very heavy handicap on the peoples of the Far East in competing intellectually with those of the West. Educators in Japan estimate that the difficulty of mastering the use of from three to five thousand ideographs wastes from two to five years of the student's time. So long as the system is retained no amount of educational effort can bring to the reading point so high a proportion of the people as one finds in the best-schooled nations of the West.

#### THE TRANSFORMATION OF CHINA

Nearly all observers in the Far East rate the common people of China higher intellectually than the common people of Japan (the élite of the two peoples being apparently equal in capacity). Nevertheless, it is unlikely that China will be Westernized at the surprising speed that has characterized the transformation of Japan. For this there are several reasons. First, the Chinese are ten times as numerous as the Japanese were and constitute a much vaster bulk to penetrate, to awaken, and to modify. Seaports are the points for the diffusion of foreign influence and inner China is far remoter from seaports than is inner Japan. Second, the Japanese were teachable, for they had borrowed before and they were willing to do so again. The Chinese did not borrow their civilization, for it was worked out in China by their ancestors. They are therefore intensely proud and, hav-

ing for centuries been the diffusers and bearers of civilization throughout eastern Asia, cannot yet bring themselves to realize the actual inferiority of their culture. They still fail to appreciate the massiveness, solidity, and bulk of Western civilization. They imagine that our superiority is along the mechanical line and fail to appreciate our advantage in respect to method. They have not sufficiently Westernized the course of study in their higher schools and they are not making any such intelligent systematic use of picked foreign scholars as Japan did for the first twenty or thirty years of her new era. Thirdly, Japan had the good fortune of possessing a native dynasty, the oldest on earth, which completely identified itself with the national welfare and put itself at the head of the reform movement. The Chinese are under an alien dynasty that does not identify itself with the national welfare, does not command the confidence of the people and seems more intent on maintaining the privileges and revenues of six million Manchus than on accelerating the progress of four hundred million Chinese. Fourthly, Japanese society formed a feudal hierarchy: at the apex the dynasty, then two hundred and fifty feudal lords, a million and a half of Samurai below them, and finally the thirty-six millions of common people. The makings of a procession were there, and when the people at the top faced West and said "March!" the rest of the nation fell in behind. China evolved out of feudalism two thousand years ago and her society is altogether too democratic in its make-up to give any element the leverage that was enjoyed by the few thousand enlightened individuals who have controlled the transformation of Japan.